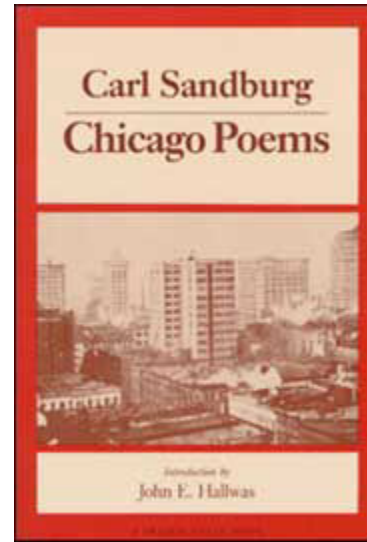


LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT



Carl Sandburg House

4646 N. Hermitage Ave.

Preliminary Landmark recommendation approved by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks, September 1, 2005



CITY OF CHICAGO
Richard M. Daley, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development
Lori T. Healey, Commissioner

The Commission on Chicago Landmarks, whose nine members are appointed by the Mayor and City Council, was established in 1968 by city ordinance. The Commission is responsible for recommending to the City Council which individual buildings, sites, objects, or districts should be designated as Chicago Landmarks, which protects them by law.

The landmark designation process begins with a staff study and a preliminary summary of information related to the potential designation criteria. The next step is a preliminary vote by the landmarks commission as to whether the proposed landmark is worthy of consideration. This vote not only initiates the formal designation process, but it places the review of city permits for the property under the jurisdiction of the Commission until a final landmark recommendation is acted on by the City Council.

This Landmark Designation Report is subject to possible revision and amendment during the designation process. Only language contained within the designation ordinance adopted by the City Council should be regarded as final.

CARL SANDBURG HOUSE

4646 NORTH HERMITAGE AVENUE

BUILT: c. 1886 (CARL SANDBURG RESIDENCE, 1912-1915)

Architect: UNKNOWN

The Carl Sandburg House is a tangible physical connection to Sandburg's importance as a writer to Chicago's literary and cultural history. One of 20th-century America's finest poets, and one of the best loved, he was also a crusading journalist, writer of children's tales, historian of Lincoln, a socialist and a traveling minstrel who collected American folk songs. The house on North Hermitage Avenue, occupied by Sandburg and his family when they first came to Chicago in 1912, was Sandburg's only Chicago residence before he moved to the western suburb of Maywood early in 1915. It was while living here that he wrote, among other poems, his perhaps most famous poem, "Chicago," from which came the famous and iconic description of Chicago as the "City of the Big Shoulders . . . Hog Butcher, Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat, Player with Railroads and Freight Handler to the Nation."

Sandburg led parallel lives as a poet and journalist. By day, he worked as a journalist at numerous Chicago publications, while, after hours, he wrote his poetic portraits of the city and became part of the City's burgeoning cultural elite. In both his poetry and prose, Sandburg spoke to and for the American century in which he lived. His own itinerant background shaped him, and, coming from Swedish-born parents, he gave his voice to the immigrant class and to the least powerful people of America. He chronicled the lives of the working class in the language of the street. His was the poetry in service of social change as he described the growing chasm between wealthy Americans and impoverished immigrants. The realism and unorthodox form of his poems made him one of the central figures in the "Chicago Renaissance," a literary movement centered in Chicago that played a significant role in the development of poetry and prose during the first two decades of the 20th century.

SANDBURG BEFORE CHICAGO

Carl August Sandburg (Jan. 6, 1878 – July 22, 1967) was born in Galesburg, Illinois, and, although known principally as a poet, he was also a biographer, journalist and folk musician. His parents were hard-working Swedish immigrants. His father, August Sandburg, was a railroad blacksmith's assistant, and his mother, Clara Mathilda Anderson, a hotel maid. A frugal couple, they attempted to instill into their seven children the importance of hard work and education as well as the omnipresent hope for the American dream. Nonetheless, Charlie, as he was called in the early years, ended his public school education after the eighth grade and began a string of jobs at the age of fourteen that included such diverse experiences as shining shoes, harvesting ice, dishwashing, portering in a barber's shop, digging potatoes, window washing, laying bricks, delivering milk and newspapers, and shining shoes in Galesburg's Union Hotel—a diversity of images that would populate his later poems.

Although he consistently worked, an undercurrent of wanderlust reappeared throughout his life, seemingly a chronic condition. Thanks to his father's connection with the railroads, he borrowed a pass in 1896 and took his first short, three-day trip to Chicago. One year later he joined the community of American hobos, thousands of men stowing away in railroad boxcars making their way west through Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska and Colorado in search of jobs. He was gone three and a half months. He worked briefly as a housepainter before enlisting in Company C of the Sixth Infantry regiment of the Illinois Volunteers for a tour of duty in the Spanish-American War. He served in Puerto Rico from July until late August, 1898.

Thanks to the military service, he was entitled to admission with free tuition at Lombard College in his hometown, where he remained until May, 1902, leaving without a degree. While at Lombard, he met his first mentor, economist and poet Philip Green Wright, who instilled a new appetite for reading and writing poetry. Sandburg showed his poetry to Wright, who then published four leaflets on his own hand press. Printed under the name Charles A. Sandburg, the Americanized version of his name, they were *In Reckless Ecstasy*, 1904, *Incidentals*, 1907, *The Complaint of a Rose*, 1908, and *Joseffy* in 1910. They contained poems, short essays and aphorisms, and were significantly influenced by his favorite writers at the time, Walt Whitman, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Rudyard Kipling, Robert Browning and Elbert Hubbard.

After college Sandburg once again roamed the country, continually adding to the catalog of images and experiences that would appear in his poetry. He began lecturing, honing his speaking abilities which would later become a significant reason for his popular appeal, and spoke on Whitman, George Bernard Shaw and Abraham Lincoln. Between 1902 and 1907, he began writing for minor journals in Chicago such as *The Lyceumite*, for which he wrote news of the "platform world," and he attempted to begin a lecturing career on the Lyceum and Chautauqua circuits. Sandburg was developing a reputation as



The Carl Sandburg House (top) is located at 4646 N. Hermitage Ave. in the Ravenswood neighborhood on Chicago's North Side.



Top left: Carl Sandburg in the early 1900s. Top right: The Carl Sandburg House as it looked circa 1941. Bottom: The Ravenswood neighborhood to which Sandburg moved in 1912 was a suburban-like community of large houses on spacious lots. This photograph is of Paulina Street between Wilson and Leland, one block east of Hermitage, circa 1900.

an impassioned orator, and this garnered the attention of Winfield P. Gaylord, a Wisconsin Social-Democratic party leader, who recruited him in 1907 to campaign for the party throughout Wisconsin. He continued to write for newspapers and journals, ultimately serving as secretary to Emil Seidel, the first socialist mayor of Milwaukee. There he met his future wife, Lilian Steichen, also a Socialist and schoolteacher, whom he called Paula. She was a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the University of Chicago and the younger sister of Edward Steichen, the nationally known painter and photographer. They were married in 1908 in Wisconsin and had three children. She encouraged him to return to his christened name, Carl Sandburg.

Ultimately, he was disenchanted with Social-Democratic party politics, the ever-widening gap between the ideal and reality, and so decided to change his life, as he had done before, by moving and starting a new job. He decided to take a job in 1912 in Chicago as a staff writer for the socialist *Chicago Evening World* newspaper. This and a handful of other newspapers and journals would over time publish his poetry, but it would remain for Harriet Monroe, founder of the Chicago journal *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, to truly launch his career as a poet.

SANDBURG AND THE CHICAGO RENAISSANCE: 1912-1915

In the summer of 1912, Sandburg left for Chicago, leaving Paula behind at the family farm in Wisconsin. Upon arriving in Chicago, he rented an apartment at 4646 North Hermitage Avenue in the North Side Chicago neighborhood of Ravenswood. The flat, located within a two-and-a-half story wood-frame house, was set in a suburban-like neighborhood of large frame houses leafy with poplars, elms and cottonwoods, and the streetscape must have reminded Sandburg of streetscapes he had left behind in Galesburg or the outskirts of Milwaukee.

Paula had expressed a preference for country living for herself and the couple's daughter Margaret, rather than the more "artistic" and bohemian life possible in Chicago's urban setting, and Sandburg hoped to please her with this apartment in a quiet neighborhood. Carl waited for her to join him and wrote to her about the house, the yard, the trees:

It's been mystically wonderful lately, that backyard, with a half moon through the poplars to the south in a haze, and rustlings...on the ground and in the trees, a sort of grand "Hush-hush, child." And as the moon slanted in last night and the incessant rustling went on softly, I thought that if we are restless and fail to love life big enough, it's because we have been away too much from the moon and the elemental rustlings.

Sandburg was able to land the job at the *Chicago Evening World* because other papers were on strike and the *World* needed more journalists to fill the void left by the other newspapers. However, when the strike was over, he tried to unionize the news writers at

the paper. By December 1912, he became unemployed when the *World* reduced its work force. The family had been reunited and barely settled when he was out of work.

Early in 1913, Sandburg found a newspaper job that suited his free-spirited temperament. He was hired by Negley D. Cochran, editor of *The Day Book*, a Scripps Company tabloid with no advertising and therefore, according to Cochran, “tells the truth.”

Cochran was a political and social reformer as well as a good journalist and editor. The job paid \$25 a week, and Sandburg was free to write what he wanted. He covered city politics, crime and labor issues. Then after hours, he could work on his own writing. One of Sandburg’s biographers, Penelope Nevin, notes in *Carl Sandburg: A Biography*: “After the day’s salaried job was finished, he worked for hours late into the night on poetry and prose. Chicago was a powerful stimulus.” He sold his articles to *New Idea*, *La Follette’s*, and *The Woman’s Magazine*. Two articles on industrial accidents that he submitted to *System: The Magazine of Business*, a trade journal, led the magazine’s editor, Daniel Vincent Casey, to offer him a job for \$35 a week, which he took.

At this point in his career, new to Chicago, Sandburg worked alone without contact to other poets. In this vacuum, he crafted his unorthodox poetic style that would later become a hallmark of the literary movement commonly called the “Chicago Renaissance.” He wove his experiences into his poems, using as subject matter all kinds of memories of day-to-day life. He loved the diversity of Chicago street life and action, but also drew inspiration from restful strolls through nature and what he called his “loafing spells.” These poems were hand written, sometimes jotted on newsprint, and rewritten at night. He was not happy at the *System*, and so this writing sustained him. By the summer of 1913, he had written the poem he titled “Chicago,” which began with the famous stanza:

Hog Butcher for the World,
Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat,
Player with Railroads and the Nation’s Freight Handler;
Stormy, husky, brawling,
City of the Big Shoulders

This Whitmanesque inventory of the City’s rough, sometimes brutal vitality provided a timeless portrait of Chicago without lapsing into reform-style muckraking. Its “free verse” reflected Sandburg’s interest in using the cadences and rhythm of everyday speech in his poetry. “Chicago” has since become a Chicago icon, expressing the City’s historic image of itself as a striving, vital, and gritty metropolis.

Chicago historian Perry Duis notes of Sandburg’s poetry of this period:

Characterizing the city as “Hog Butcher for the World,” he shocked genteel readers both with its form and content. . . . But Sandburg knew which economic forces had really built Chicago, and as a young man alone in the city he had known what it was like to encounter painted women under streetlamps. He had seen conditions in these sweatshops, and while at the *Day Book* in 1915, he covered a garment workers’ strike. thus, when he wrote poetry about tired shopgirls on the Halsted streetcar, he was speaking from experience. For the next decade his poems continued to reflect the world he knew.

Chicago

Hog Butcher for the World,
Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat,
Player with Railroads and the Nation's Freight Handler;
Stormy, husky, brawling,
City of the Big Shoulders:

They tell me you are wicked, and I believe them; for I have seen
your painted women under the gas lamps luring the farm boys.

And they tell me you are crooked, and I answer: Yes, it is true

I have seen the gunman kill and go free to kill again.

And they tell me you are brutal, and my reply is: On the faces of
women and children I have seen the marks of wanton hunger.

And having answered so I turn once more to those who sneer at
this my city, and I give them back the sneer and say to them:
Come and show me another city with lifted head singing so proud
to be alive and coarse and strong and cunning.

Flinging magnetic curses amid the toil of piling job on job, here is
a tall bold slugger set vivid against the little soft cities;

Fierce as a dog with tongue lapping for action, cunning as a savage
pitted against the wilderness,

Bareheaded,

Shoveling,

Wrecking,

Planning,

Building, breaking, rebuilding,

Under the smoke, dust all over his mouth, laughing with white teeth,

Under the terrible burden of destiny laughing as a young man laughs,

Laughing even as an ignorant fighter laughs who has never lost a battle,

* Bragging and laughing that under his wrist is the pulse, and under
his ribs the heart of the people,

Laughing!

Laughing the stormy, husky, brawling laughter of Youth, half-

naked, sweating, proud to be Hog Butcher, Tool Maker, Stacker
of Wheat, Player with Railroads and Freight Handler to the Nation.

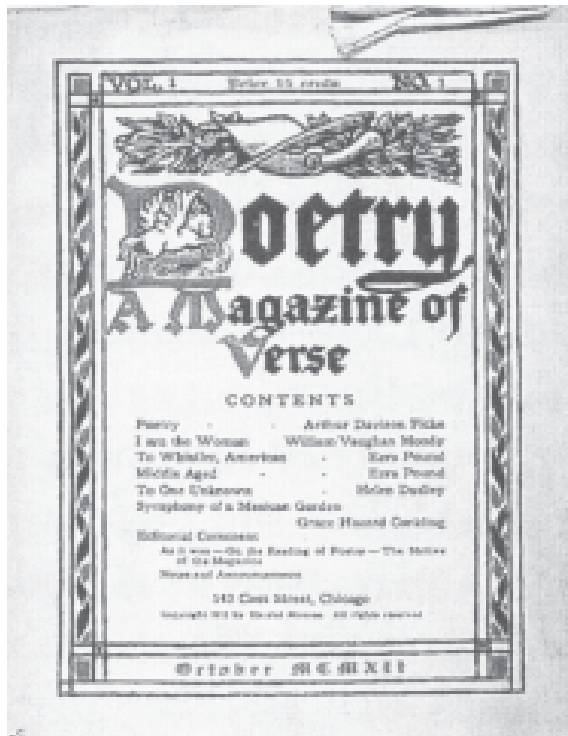
The text of "Chicago," Sandburg's best-known poem, written while living in the Carl Sandburg House.

Free verse poetry developed among avant-garde poets in both Europe and America in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The term “free verse” originally was a literal translation of “vers libre,” the name of a movement that originated in France in the 1880s, although it also has been applied to the poetry of Walt Whitman and other earlier poets that experimented with irregular rhythms. It is “free” only in a relative sense. It abandons the steady, abstract rhythm of traditional poetry and its dependence on units of metrical feet per line for rhythms that are based on common language elements such as sounds, words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs. Free verse, therefore, eliminates much of the artificiality and some of the aesthetic distance of poetic expression and substitutes a flexible formal organization suited to the modern idiom and more casual tonality of the language used. The first English-language poets to be influenced by vers libre, notably T.E. Hulme, F.S. Flint, Richard Aldington, Ezra Pound, and T.S. Eliot, were students of French poetry. American poets Carl Sandburg, William Carlos Williams, Marianne Moore, and Wallace Stevens all wrote some variety of free verse.

Paula submitted “Chicago” to *American Magazine*, which rejected it. Later that fall, she was pregnant with their second child. Two life-altering events occurred that autumn as the daughter was lost at birth and Sandburg was let go from the *System*. He was told by his boss, F. M. Feiker, “...I feel that you ought to get into another line as soon as possible.” Sandburg had been searching most of his life for that “line.” He found a stopgap job at *The American Artisan and Hardware Record* writing a column about hardware interests. Meanwhile, he renewed his commitment to poetry based on Chicago’s diverse culture and images that appealed to him, including the faces of passersby on Michigan Avenue, Hungarians picnicking along the Des Plaines River, Lincoln Park bronze statues, and a streetcar on Halsted Street.

In the winter of 1914, he and Paula decided to send nine poems to an upstart journal, *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*. Sandburg noted that it featured poems that departed from traditional poetic forms. He wondered how long such an experimental venture would last, particularly with only 1500 subscriptions at the time, but thought that the magazine might be interested in his work.

Just as modern American drama had its beginnings in “little theatres,” modern American poetry took form in “little magazines” such as *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*. The magazine was the brainchild of Harriet Monroe (1860-1936), who had started it two years before in 1912. Educated at the Visitation Convent in Washington, D.C., Monroe worked on various Chicago newspapers, including the *Chicago Tribune*, as an art and drama critic while privately writing verse and verse plays in the genteel tradition of the time. Her two best-known works were “Ode to the Columbian Exposition,” written for the dedication of Chicago’s World’s Columbian Exposition, held in 1893, and “Cantata,” celebrating Chicago’s history, which was sung at the dedication of the Auditorium Building in 1889. Her brother-in-law, John Wellborn Root, was a partner with D. H. Burnham in one of Chicago’s most successful architectural firms of the period, and she wrote his biography after his sudden death in 1891.



Title page from an issue of *Poetry*:
A Magazine of Verse



Alice Corbin Henderson, one of *Poetry* magazine's associate editors, and a key person in getting Sandburg's *Chicago Poems* published in book form in 1916.



Harriet Monroe, editor of *Poetry*, in 1906.

Monroe's ambition to found a review devoted exclusively to poetry was achieved by securing the backing of wealthy Chicago patrons and by inviting contributions from a wide range of contemporary poets. The magazine's offices were in an old mansion on Cass Street (now Wabash Avenue), on Chicago's Near North Side, where she entertained patrons and met poets. Monroe was interested in poems that embraced subjects based on contemporary life and expressed in modern speech and rhythms. She was not alone in this leaning and participated in "The Little Room," a group of fellow Chicago writers and artists, such as Hamlin Garland, who pursued a social realism in their work. Through Monroe's open-minded view of the possibilities of modern poetry, *Poetry* became one of the leading venues for English-language poetry during the 1910s.

Monroe's associate editors, Alice Corbin Henderson and Eunice Tietjens, were the first to read Sandburg's submissions. They were drawn to their verbal enthusiasm and unconventional form, and urged Monroe to publish them. She first responded to their stark reality and unorthodox form, but soon embraced their fresh originality and force. Each of the nine poems was spare and somber, alternating the harshest of realities with a breath of tenderness. Sandburg sought to use the language of modern speech, the street vernacular. His imagination was his private space and it was shaped by exterior events; here was the catalog of Sandburg's wanderings in written form.

The poems were accepted for publication by Monroe, and, in the aftermath of this acceptance, Sandburg's life was transformed. He left *The American Artisan and Hardware Record* and returned to *The Day Book*, now writing under his own name. As importantly, he joined the fellowship of other writers published by *Poetry*. The journal was more than a publication; its office was a gathering place for the Chicago literati, and there Sandburg became acquainted with fellow writers and poets Vachel Lindsay, Edgar Lee Masters, Theodore Dreiser and Floyd Dell. He was also in writing contact with noted poet Ezra Pound, the associate editor for *Poetry* in London, who wrote him letters of encouragement and editorial advice. In addition to these gatherings at the office, he and Paula found themselves invited to take part in other artistic endeavors, such as the gatherings at the Cliff Dwellers Club, a private club of artists, architects and writers that met in the penthouse of Chicago's Orchestra Hall on South Michigan Avenue.

With the publication of his poems in *Poetry* and his return to *The Day Book*, Sandburg approached both sides of his writing life with renewed enthusiasm. At *The Day Book*, he enjoyed the modest yet stable salary and, perhaps more so, the wide latitude that Cochran allowed him in his writings. He covered events and topics that interested him, including labor, socialist and reform issues. He also eagerly awaited the March 1914 issue of *Poetry* in which his poems, including "Chicago," were scheduled for publication.

When the issue appeared, Sandburg's poems produced a storm of reaction; many readers objected to the brutality of the images and to his use of slang, while others welcomed the freshness of the voice. Without deigning to name either Sandburg or any of his poems, *The Dial*, another literary magazine published in Chicago, found "no trace of beauty in the ragged lines...[which] admits no aesthetic claim of any description, and acknowledges subordination to

THE DIAL

A Semi-Monthly Journal of Literary Criticism, Discussion, and Information.

THE DIAL (founded in 1880) is published on the 1st and 16th of each month. TERMS OF SUBSCRIPTION, \$2. a year in advance, postage prepaid in the United States and Mexico; Foreign and Canadian postage 50 cents per year extra. REMITTANCES should be by check, or by express or postal order, payable to THE DIAL COMPANY. Unless otherwise ordered, subscriptions will begin with the current number. When no direct request to discontinue at expiration of subscription is received, it is assumed that a continuance of the subscription is desired. ADVERTISING RATES furnished on application. Published by THE DIAL COMPANY, Fine Arts Building, Chicago. Entered as Second-Class Matter October 8, 1902, at the Post Office at Chicago, Illinois, under Act of March 3, 1879.

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NEW LAMPS FOR OLD.

"Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all Science." The quotation is so hackneyed that we are almost ashamed to recall it to the attention of our readers, who must have known it by heart all their lives, but there are times when the impulse to go back to first principles becomes an imperative mandate. "A frequent recurrence to the principles of civil government is absolutely necessary to preserve the blessings of liberty." These noble words of the Illinois Constitution remind us of a similar urgency of obligation in other spheres of thought than the political, and wherever the fundamentals are flouted or ignored, it behooves those who stand for sanity and the acceptance of the ripe fruits of the world's experience to rally around the old standards. The parlous times in which we live afford occasions innumerable for thus calling out the old guard, for it has become the fashion with young people to reject everything that has been tested in the alembic of reflection, and to offer us in its stead all manner of raw and fantastic imaginings. Whatever is old must perforce be outworn; whatever is new must be deserving of serious consideration just because of its novelty, and the more freakish the form of expression, the more assured the triumph.

What we are about to say is concerned mainly with the art of poetry, which accounts for the Wordsworthian text, and also for the following collocation of words descriptive of Chicago:

"Hog Butcher for the World,
Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat,
Player with Railroads and the Nation's Freight
Handler;
Stormy, husky, brawling,
City of the Big Shoulders."

Here a word of explanation is needed. The typographical arrangement of this jargon creates a suspicion that it is intended to be taken as some form of poetry, and the suspicion is confirmed by the fact that it stands in the forefront of the latest issue of a futile little periodical described as "a magazine of verse." This, then, is what the coterie responsible for

Part of *The Dial's* scathing attack on Sandburg's "Chicago" shortly after its publication in *Poetry*. *The Dial* was a rival magazine to *Poetry*.

no kind of law.” Monroe had taken an editorial chance and defended her actions in the May issue of *Poetry*. Then, in November 1914, Sandburg received a \$200 prize for “Chicago” and other poems from a poetry contest run by *Poetry* magazine. Regardless of *The Dial*’s critics and others, Sandburg’s career was launched. He began to enjoy his reputation as a rising poet and champion of an informal “worker’s revolution.”

Through his experiences at the newspaper he was assured of a ready and constant stream of potential subject matter, oftentimes projecting his anger at social injustice. He dug up and printed many stories about workers abused by shoddy business practices, galvanizing his attitude about the adversities of the lowly. He prowled the city streets, talking to whoever would talk with him; always writing, either at the paper or during the quiet nights at home. He was interested in Midwestern speech patterns, particularly those spoken by the working class in industrialized areas. It was his subjects that set his work apart; and as his output increased, many readers, if not critics, accepted him.

In the wake of this newfound success, the Sandburg family left their apartment in the simple frame house in Ravenswood. Probably in early 1915, the Sandburgs moved to a small house on South Eighth Street in Maywood, a western Chicago suburb. (Information about the Sandburgs’ move to Maywood differs. A *Chicago Tribune* article dated November 1, 1914, announcing the *Poetry* award to Sandburg, gives his address as the house at 4646 N. Hermitage Ave. Another source of information on the Sandburg House, John Drury’s *Old Chicago Houses*, places the move to Maywood in 1916. However, the 1915 Chicago city directory no longer lists the Sandburgs on Hermitage Avenue, and a *Chicago Tribune* article from October 5, 1915, mentions that Sandburg had recently moved to Maywood.) They at first rented, then later purchased the home with a \$500 loan from a friend of Paula’s family.

With his success, Sandburg had found himself welcomed and absorbed into Chicago’s literary circle, but perhaps found his success creating strains at home. He was spending more and more time in Chicago, enjoying the company of this circle; perhaps Paula was feeling more isolated. She offered freedom for them both through a divorce, but Sandburg refused, saying he relied on her too deeply. The move to a suburban setting may have been meant for Paula’s benefit, who preferred a less urban lifestyle.

Meanwhile, Sandburg’s growing fame was solidified in the next few years through the compilation of his poems in book form. Associate editor Alice Corbin Henderson at *Poetry* magazine convinced book editor Alfred Harcourt to read them on behalf of a prominent book publisher, Henry Holt and Company. By January 1916, with Paula’s help, Carl had compiled a manuscript of 260 poems arranged in seven sections. The first section, *Chicago Poems*, included his vivid portraits of the city. The second section, *Handfuls*, had a gentler voice compared to the third section, *War Poems (1914-1915)*, his collection of poems inspired by the early years of World War I. *The Road and the End*, the book’s fourth section, contained several of his earliest poems, while *Frogs and Fires* spoke of themes of love and

memory. *Shadows* returned to city themes with haunting portraits of prostitutes, while the book's last section, *Other Days (1900-1910)*, also contained early works.

On February 15, 1916, he signed his first book contract. The entire collection was titled *Chicago Poems*. It received wide notice and, just as with his first appearance in *Poetry*, *Chicago Poems* was also controversial. It established his reputation as “the people’s poet,” the bard who sang their songs and expressed their spirit and their tribulations. He’d spent years in seemingly unfocused work and travel, but had been committing to memory countless vignettes of everyday people and their lives that fed his poetry, and now he poured the passion of their lives into his verse.

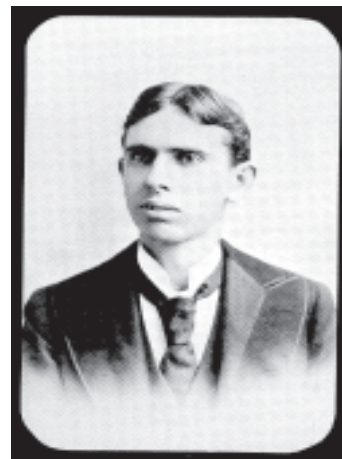
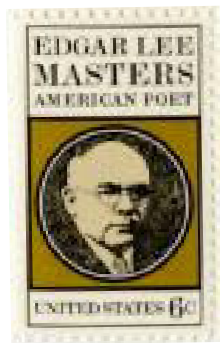
The Chicago Renaissance

The first year of World War I, 1914, has been called by scholars a year of a revival in poetry, a literary revolt, or the “Chicago Renaissance” in literature. The term was not applied until years later when the cumulative influence of poets such as Sandburg, first published in that year, could be analyzed. More than fifty years had passed since New Englanders such as Emerson, Thoreau, Whittier and Longfellow had dominated American arts and letters. Other sections of the country had their emerging giants such as Washington Irving, Walt Whitman and Herman Melville around New York, Joel Chandler Harris in the South and Bret Harte in the West, but none of these were of sufficient depth and breadth to be termed a movement.

The Chicago Renaissance lasted approximately thirteen years from 1912 to 1925. The leading writers of this renaissance—Theodore Dreiser, Sherwood Anderson, Edgar Lee Masters, and Carl Sandburg—realistically depicted the contemporary urban environment. Most of these writers were originally from small Middle Western towns and decried the loss of traditional rural values in the increasingly industrialized and materialistic American society. The renaissance also encompassed the revitalization of journalism as a literary medium; writers such as Floyd Dell, Anderson, Dreiser, and Sandburg all were associated at one time with Chicago newspapers. The Little Theatre established in 1912 by Maurice Browne became an important outlet for the creative talents of young playwrights.

The first stirrings of the Chicago renaissance were felt after the World’s Columbian Exhibition of 1893, an event that attracted young Middle Western writers to the city. The Little Room, a literary group established in the 1890s, included both artists and patrons of the arts and encouraged literary activity. After the turn of the century, William Dean Howells, then editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, encouraged writers to write honestly about what they knew best. Howells was called a native realist and the movement that would become the Chicago Renaissance expanded on this concept of realism or naturalism.

The novel that would lead the way was Theodore Dreiser’s *Sister Carrie*. Dreiser knew well of midwestern rural and urban existence and captured them in this novel. The Socialists who were gaining strength in the first decade encouraged the movement and they championed an overthrow of the capitalist exploiters and an even distribution of rights in a democracy. Chicago’s phenomenal growth not only created this capitalist class but also served to attract a



Besides Carl Sandburg, the “Chicago Renaissance” literary movement that flowered in the 1910s and 20s included: (top left to right) poets Edgar Lee Masters, poet Vachel Lindsay, and novelist Sherwood Anderson. Middle and bottom: A selection of books by innovative Chicago authors of the period, including Sandburg’s *Chicago Poems*.

group of poets, novelists and editors who would write about the social injustices generated by this class.

These writers were content to describe life as they saw it, countering the sentimental tendencies or puritanical leanings of earlier writers. Before 1912, writers and artists resisted the city's rawness and brutality, almost being ashamed of it; but writers such as Sandburg, lawyer-turned-poet Edgar Lee Masters, journalist Ben Hecht and novelist Sherwood Anderson glorified in its toughness. Hecht, from Racine, Wisconsin, began as a reporter for the *Chicago Daily Journal* in 1914. That same year, Masters' *Spoon River Anthology*, was published as a collection of monologues spoken by ghosts of a small Illinois town. Rejecting flowery Victorian-style language, they embraced vernacular language that was plain and frank.

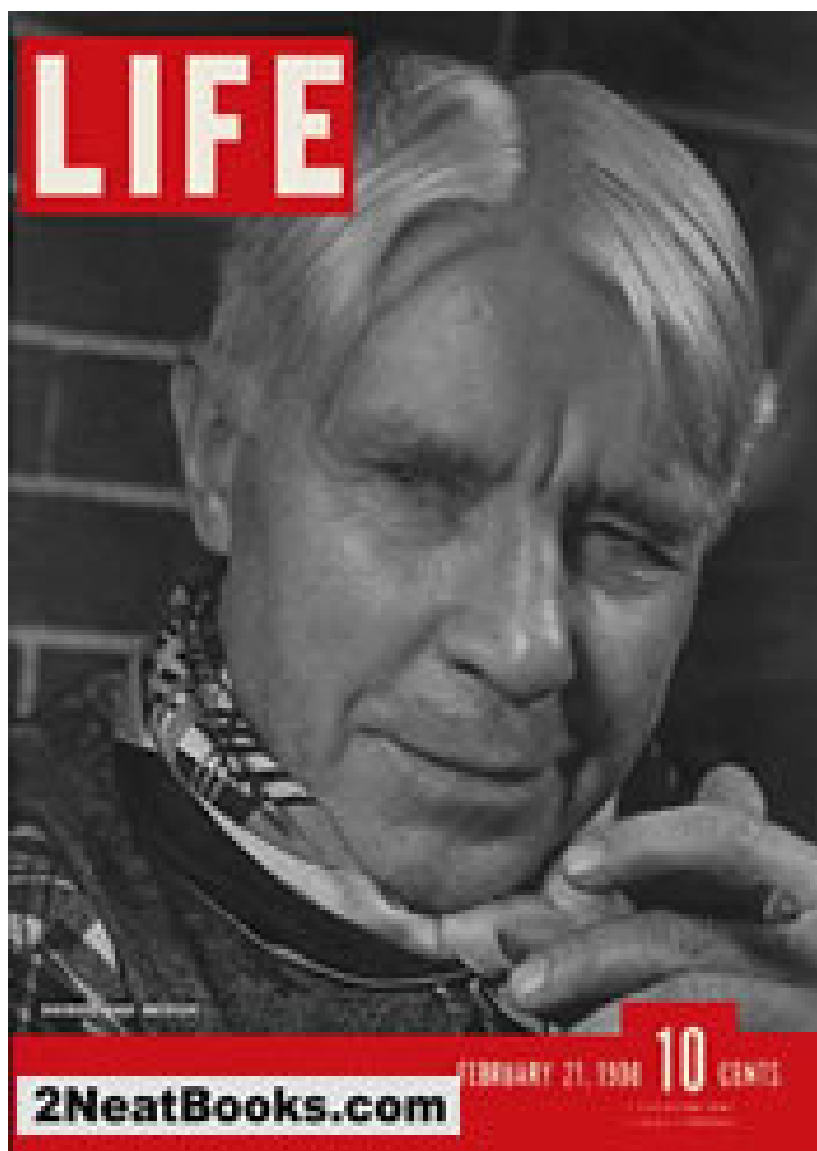
It is into this milieu that Harriet Monroe became intent on launching a magazine devoted entirely to poetry. Since she was from an old Chicago family, she was able to secure the backing of those from similar backgrounds, such as Hobart Chatfield-Taylor, patron of the arts and part-time writer. *Poetry* magazine became an important institutional anchor for Chicago Renaissance writers such as Sandburg.

The Chicago Renaissance was continued with Theodore Dreiser's *The Titan*. Monroe was featuring the poems of Sandburg and Robert Frost and others were publishing Edgar Lee Masters. T.S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" appeared in *Poetry* in 1915. Sandburg's poems about World War I kept a focused eye on how the tragedy affected individual lives and circumstances, details that were lost in the greater story of the war. He wrote about our inability to learn from the lessons of military history. These are the poems gathered in a section within *Chicago Poems* under the heading "War Poems (1914-1915)". The movement reached its zenith in 1915-1916 with the publication of Sandburg's *Chicago Poems*; but by 1921 and the publication of his *Cornhuskers* and *Smoke and Steel*, the intellectual activity of the movement's writers was no longer vigorous. It had sprung up in a mood of hope, freshness and idealism which the war had largely squashed.

SANDBURG'S LATER CAREER

Just as he moved throughout the country, seeking experiences, Sandburg also restlessly moved through jobs. *The Day Book* ceased publication in 1916; later that year he joined the staff of the *Chicago Daily News* where he found his journalistic niche covering mainly labor activities. He worked directly with the news editor, Henry Justin Smith, who had mentored other significant journalists including Ben Hecht, John Gunther and Lloyd Lewis. He entered probably the most significant phase of his journalistic writing. He covered World War I from Europe, remaining in Stockholm for five months, for the Newspaper Enterprise Association and as a syndicated columnist during World War II. Between the wars he wrote about politics, crime, business and civil rights.

In addition to his writing and reporting he was also a folk musician who accompanied himself on the guitar. He was Sandburg the showman, interspersing his poems and commentary between



Carl Sandburg on the cover of *Life* magazine in 1938.

the songs ultimately becoming the popular platform entertainer. He had collected hobo songs during his travels and published many of them for the first time in *The American Songbag* in 1927.

Sandburg was a devoted family man, and before World War I he began inventing zany American fairy tales for his daughters. He published a series of storybooks for young people as well as two books of poems for children. Their popularity prompted Alfred Harcourt to suggest that he write a juvenile biography of Lincoln. Sandburg launched himself into the project ultimately reading thousands of documents. Before Harcourt's suggestion and beginning in 1918, he had begun to seriously consider writing about Lincoln. On his lecture tours, he would frequently seek out the Lincoln collections in that particular city. Plus he had seen the extensive collection owned by Chicagoan, Oliver Barrett. His emersion in the subject led him instead to write a full-fledged biography portraying Lincoln as the tragic hero who embodied the national spirit. Just as with his poetry, the biography progressed through heaps of incidents and anecdotes. The material was indicative of human behavior. This led to first series of volumes, *Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years*, 1926, and later the second set, *Abraham Lincoln: The War Years*, 1939. Sandburg, the biographer, won the Pulitzer Prize in history for the latter, and made a small fortune from the sale of these best-selling books.

In 1945, he purchased "Connemara," a 245-acre farm in Flat Rock, North Carolina, and eventually settled there to write his memoirs. Paula was breeding champion dairy goats and needed more grazing land and a more temperate climate than their home at the time, located on the dunes of Lake Michigan. He published *Complete Poems* in 1950 which earned his second Pulitzer Prize one year later. In 1953, he published *Always the Young Strangers*, an autobiographical account of the first twenty years of his life. By this time, his reputation was cemented, both nationally and internationally, and he was a much-loved poet and spokesman who freely spoke on contemporary issues.

He interrupted work on the second volume of his autobiography, *Ever the Winds of Chance*, to collaborate with his brother-in-law, Edward Steichen, on a photographic exhibition, *The Family of Man*, in 1955. It consisted of 503 pictures, gathered by Steichen from 68 countries, that he felt emphasized the oneness of mankind. During the Cold War and McCarthyism of the 1950s, this was a bold statement. Steichen wrote the introduction to the exhibition catalog which sold over five million copies while Sandburg wrote the prologue. It emphasized his now life-long themes of "toil, struggle, blood and dreams, among lovers...workers, loafers, fighters, players, gamblers...landlords and the landless, the loved and the unloved, the brutal and the compassionate – one big family hugging close to the ball of earth for its life and being."

Sandburg lived much of 1960 in Hollywood where he was the creative consultant for George Stevens's *The Greatest Story Ever Told*. His last book of poetry was written in 1963, *Honey and Salt*. He died in 1967.

Carl Sandburg's fame as one of America's best-known writers has been expressed through a variety of honors. In 1962, he was named Illinois's Poet Laureate, a title he held until his death.

Carl Sandburg College in his native Galesburg is named in his honor. A plethora of libraries and elementary and high schools in many towns and cities throughout the United States are named for him, including ones in Springfield, Wheaton, Rolling Meadows, and Orland Park, Illinois; Livonia, Michigan; Alexandria, Virginia; Rockville, Maryland; and Centennial, Colorado. An important middle-class Chicago housing project, Carl Sandburg Village, built on the Near North Side between 1960 and 1975 as part of urban renewal, bears his name. His birthplace in Galesburg is maintained by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency as the Carl Sandburg State Historic Site, and his later home in Flat Rock, North Carolina, is managed by the National Park Service as a National Historic Site.

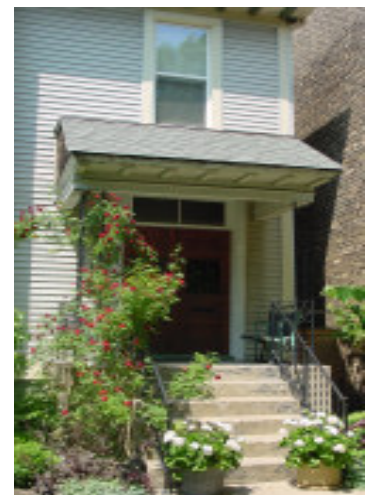
THE CARL SANDBURG HOUSE ON NORTH HERMITAGE AVENUE

The house where Carl Sandburg rented an apartment while living in Chicago is located in the North-Side Ravenswood neighborhood on the west side of North Hermitage Avenue, between Wilson and Leland Avenues. The house within which the apartment was located was originally built as a single-family house circa 1886 by William H. Bryan, a real-estate entrepreneur in the Ravenswood community, which at the time was part of the suburban Township of Lake View. In 1891 the house was sold to S. John Blomquist, then in 1899 to Rudolph Wehrli, and both men are listed in Chicago city directories as living in the building. In addition, the United States Census of 1910 lists only the Wehrli family as residing in the house. In 1911, the house was sold to George N. Gilbert of the Ravenswood real-estate firm of J. B. Guthrie & Co. Gilbert is not listed in city directories as living in the house, indicating that the house was divided into apartments just before Sandburg took residence in it in 1912.

The building is a two-and-a-half-story wood-frame house on a raised brick foundation. It has a cross-gable roof, and the principal elevation has a bay window adjacent to the main entrance. The raised entrance is covered with a slanting porch roof. Most of the modest Italianate architectural detail and surface texture is located in the two gables. Each gable has a three-part window with double-hung sash windows with nine-over-nine lights. On the Hermitage elevation, the gable is shingled with a fish-scale pattern above and below the windows with horizontal shingles between. There is vertical wooden siding within the side gable. The gable or roof edge flares slightly at the eave. Under the main eave there are corbels or purlins, modest in scale, and square in section. This wooden detail is repeated in the gables in shallow lintels above the window and again along the porch roof.

The building is clad with artificial siding (the original wood siding may remain underneath), and at the southeast corner at foundation level, a decorative apron of diamond-shaped shingles (not original) has been added. Some of the windows have been replaced, and are possibly of smaller sizes, particularly in the southeast corner and possibly in the gables. The porch has a shed roof with columns and railing of decorative iron. Paired wooden front doors are paneled below with a glazed upper half and a fixed glazed transom above.

The 4600-block of Hermitage contains a mixture of several housing types ranging from wood-frame 19th-century single-family residences to brick courtyard apartments such as the one



The Carl Sandburg House is a wood-frame house with simple Queen Anne-style detailing.

adjacent to the Sandburg residence on the north. All Saints Episcopal Church, an 1883 shingle style building, is at the southwest corner of Wilson and Hermitage and was designated a Chicago Landmark in 1982. The original building permit for the Sandburg House does not exist. (Until 1889, Ravenswood was part of Lake View Township and outside Chicago city limits; building permits for Lake View Township have not survived.) The house is a contributing building in the East Ravenswood Historic District, roughly bounded by Lawrence, Clark, Montrose and Damen Avenues, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and was identified as “orange” in the Chicago Historic Resources Survey because of its historic association with Carl Sandburg.

The area that became the Ravenswood neighborhood originally was a farming community of predominantly Germans, but with a smattering of Swedes, Swiss, and Luxembourgers. It remained sparsely populated when nearby Graceland Cemetery was chartered in 1860 and the town of Lake View was incorporated in 1865. In 1868 the Ravenswood Land Company was formed to develop the area as a 194-acre suburban development located northwest of the cemetery and adjacent to the Chicago & North Western Railroad line (now the Metra North commuter line). Additional subdivisions took place during the 1870s.

The land company proposed to create a residential retreat outside the city, and the area today, although annexed to Chicago in 1889, retains many of its original suburban wood-frame houses, mixed with more compact brick two-flats and larger-scale brick apartment buildings built after annexation. After the Chicago Fire, there was a significant influx of residents because less expensive wood-frame housing was permitted outside the city’s limits. These wood-frame buildings are still evident throughout Ravenswood, and the Sandburg house exemplifies this period of construction.

Ravenswood, along with the rest of the town of Lake View, was annexed to Chicago in 1889. This, along with improvements in public transportation such as the nearby Ravenswood elevated line (now the Brown Line) that began operation in 1907, encouraged more intensive development in the area in the 1910s and 1920s at the time Sandburg lived in the neighborhood. Despite these developments, Ravenswood remained a handsome residential neighborhood, and a Chicago newspaper in 1909 described it as “Chicago’s beauty spot.” Its leafy streetscapes of large frame houses in 1912 must have appealed to Sandburg’s wife Paula, who appears to have reluctantly left the Wisconsin farm that she loved.

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION

According to the Municipal Code of Chicago (Sect. 2-120-690), the Commission on Chicago Landmarks has the authority to make a final recommendation of landmark designation for a building, structure, object, or district if the Commission determines it meets two or more of the stated “criteria for landmark designation,” as well as possesses a significant degree of its historic design integrity.

The following should be considered by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in determining whether to recommend that the Carl Sandburg House be designated as a Chicago Landmark.

Criterion 1: Critical Part of the City's History

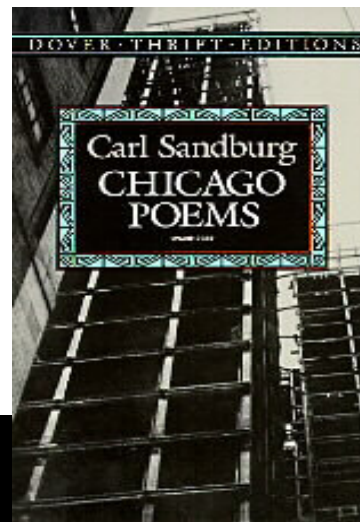
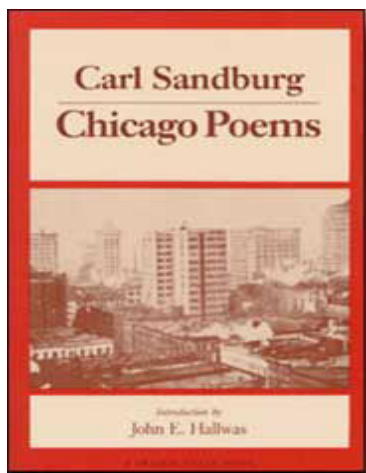
Its value as an example of the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other aspect of the heritage of the City of Chicago, State of Illinois or the United States.

- The Carl Sandburg House is the only Chicago home for the noted Chicago poet and journalist and was where he lived when writing his seminal poem “Chicago,” which has come to symbolize Chicago’s working-class heritage with its “City of Big Shoulders” verse; Carl Sandburg is considered one of the United States’s most important poets and writers, exemplifying the importance of working-class imagery in twentieth-century American poetry and literature.
- Through its associations with Carl Sandburg, the Carl Sandburg House is significant in the development of the Chicago-based literary movement commonly called the “Chicago Renaissance,” which flourished during the 1910s when Sandburg lived in the house and was a vital part of this movement.

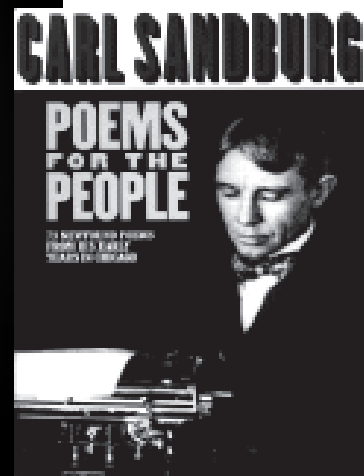
Criterion 3: Significant Person

Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other aspect of the development of the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, or the United States.

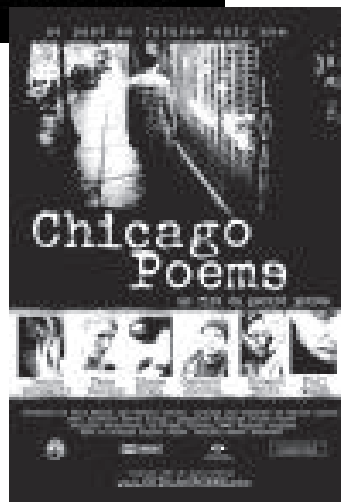
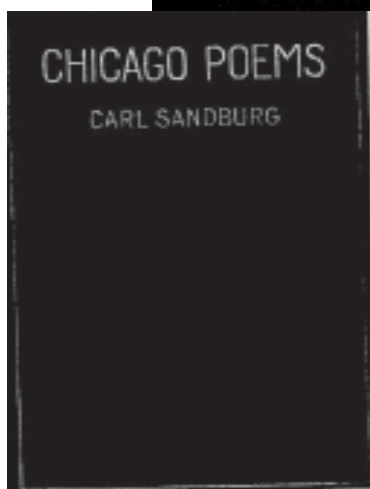
- The Carl Sandburg House is the only Chicago residence of Carl Sandburg, who occupied a second-floor apartment in the building from 1912 to 1915.
- Carl Sandburg is one of America’s finest and best-known poets and writers and one of the nation’s leading literary figures of his day, writing more than a dozen books of poetry, essays, and biographies, including such noteworthy books as *Chicago Poems*, *Cornhuskers*, *Smoke and Steel*, and an award-winning multi-volume biography of Abraham Lincoln.
- Carl Sandburg was uniquely associated through his poetry with Chicago and its working-class culture, including the seminal poem “Chicago,” written while living in the Sandburg House.
- Carl Sandburg was one of Chicago’s most noted journalists, working for various Chicago publications for many years, including the *Day Book* and the *Chicago Daily News*, writing extensively on social issues, including labor struggles, race relations, and working-class life.
- Through the broad popular appeal of Sandburg’s journalism and poetry, he publicized the plight of Chicago’s working-class and immigrant families in early 20th century Chicago, both nationally and internationally.



Carl Sandburg



Chicago Poems



Chicago Poems has been published repeatedly over the almost 90 years since its publication.

Integrity Criteria

The integrity of the proposed landmark must be preserved in light of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and ability to express its historic community, architecture or aesthetic interest or value.

Based on a photograph published in John Drury's *Old Chicago Houses* in 1941, the building was originally a simply designed wood-frame house with horizontal wood clapboarding, a simple sloped-roof porch, and minimal detailing around windows and eaves. Although the original wood siding has been replaced or covered over by artificial siding, and a decorative "wainscoting" of diamond-pane shingles has been added on the first floor, the overall visual character of the building has not been substantially altered. It retains its original siting, overall form, and many of its historic exterior details, including simple wood detailing around the porch and gables. At least some windows have been replaced, and some may occupy smaller openings, but their overall historic configuration largely remains.

SIGNIFICANT HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

Whenever a building, structure, object, or district is under consideration for landmark designation, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks is required to identify the "significant historical and architectural features" of the property. This is done to enable the owners and the public to understand which elements are considered most important to preserve the historical and architectural character of the proposed landmark.

Based upon its evaluation of the Carl Sandburg House, the Commission recommends that the significant features be identified as:

- All exterior elevations, including rooflines, of the building.

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Sandburg's writing has come to define Chicago. Top: A compilation of Chicago writers, including Sandburg. Bottom: A recent history of Chicago uses arguably the most famous line from Sandburg's poem "Chicago" as its title.

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Illustrations

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From *Chicago History*, Winter 1975-76: cover (bottom right); pp. 4 (top left); 9 (bottom left, right), 11; 14 (top middle)

From Drury, *Old Chicago Houses*: p. 4 (top right).

From Mayer & Wade, *Chicago: Birth of a Metropolis*: p. 4 (bottom).

From Heise, *Chaos, Creativity, and Culture*: p. 7, 9 (top left); 22 (bottom left), 24 (top).

From Duis, *Chicago: Creating New Traditions*: p. 14 (top right, middle, bottom right).

From www.alaskacoinexchange.com: cover (top right); p. 14 (top left).

From www.2neatbooks.com: p. 16.

From www.bartleby.com: p. 22 (top left).

From www.readinglists.co.uk: p. 22 (top right).

From www.carl-sandburg.com: p. 22 (middle).

From www.barcelonareview.com: p. 22 (middle left).

From www.ralphmag.org: p. 22 (middle right).

From www.chicagopoems.com: p. 22 (top right).

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